Seligmann & Seligmann E-6 (1907-1908) 1911
AXS Vedda AXS

PREFACE

THE Veddas have been regarded as one of the most primitive of existing races, and it has long been felt desirable that their social life and religious ideas should be investigated as thoroughly as possible. The welcome opportunity of conducting this research was afforded me on the initiative of Dr A.C. Haddon, who suggested to the Honourable Mr John Ferguson and Dr Arthur Willey that it was desirable that the Ceylon Government should continue its enlightened policy of studying the anthropology, archaeology and history of Ceylon and its peoples. This proposal received the warmest support of the Governor, Sir Henry Blake, G.C.M.G., and his successor the present Governor, His Excellency Sir Henry E. McCallum, G.C.M.G., A.D.C., of the Colonial Secretary and of the other members of the Legislative Council who made a liberal grant covering the expenses of the expedition in the field.

Not only was the work urgently needed on account of its scientific importance, but it was known that the Veddas were a numerically small people verging on extinction, and so affected by contact with Tamils and Sinhalese that if they were not studied promptly there was every possibility that it would soon be too late to study them at all; indeed, with all my efforts I was able to meet only four families, and hear of two more, who I believe had never practised cultivation. Pure-blooded Veddas are not quite so rare as this statement implies. The Danigala community, the best known "wild" Veddas of Ceylon, are still reasonably pure-blooded, though they have adopted many Sinhalese habits, including cultivation, and have assumed the rôle of professional primitive man. They are commonly fetched to be interviewed by travellers at the nearest rest house, where they appear clad only in the traditional scanty Vedda garment, whereas, when not on show, they dress very much as the neighbouring peasant Sinhalese.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

133 height. Clear rock-strewn streams abound, their banks
137 brightened by the deep green leaves and the bright red flowers of the *ratwal* (*Ixora coccinea*). Scattered masses of rock often of great size form convenient shelters for the Veddas, and assist the rapid drainage of the country, which does not become water-logged even during torrential rains. This beautiful country is rich in game. To the east, where many Veddas have drifted, the jungle is thicker, the land lies lower, and is generally less healthy. The Nuwaragala Hills to the north of the Nilgala ranges are perhaps the wildest part of the island and are more densely clothed in jungle, but there are plenty of streams, while the slope of the country permits of ready drainage.

The coastal zone north of Batticaloa inhabited by the coast Veddas is flat and sandy, and the vegetation though dense is often less tall and less abundant than in other parts of the country. Salt water marshes are common, and the country is cut into by numerous lagoons and creeks, often bounded by a fringe of mangroves which stretches some distance up the mouths of the rivers. Although this area may now, and
131 for yet a few years, be rightly called the Vedda country it must
161 not be thought that any considerable number of its inhabitants
563 are Veddas, or that they exercise any territorial or political influence; on the contrary, they constitute an insignificant fraction of the Tamil and Sinhalese inhabitants before whom they are rapidly disappearing, partly by intermarriage and absorption, partly owing to misery and a high death rate brought about by sheer inability to cope with the new state of affairs that the increased settlement of this, the wildest part of the island, has brought about.

Formerly the Vedda country is known to have embraced
131 the whole of the Uva, and much of the Central and North
175 Central Provinces, while there is no reason to suppose that their territory did not extend beyond these limits. Indeed there is no reasonable doubt that the Veddas are identical with the "Yakkas" of the Mahavansa and other native chronicles.

175 The seventh chapter of the Mahawansa relates the arrival in Ceylon, B.C. 543, of Vijaya who married Kuweni an aboriginal princess (*Yakkini*) and by her assistance destroyed a great

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

shorter ceremony *rumula*, this being an older name than *kolamaduwa*[1].

It appeared that the invocations at present in use among the Kovil Vanamai Veddas were those used in the old man's youth, for although he had not, as he stated (truthfully we believe), been closely associated with the Veddas for many years he recognised a number of Vedda invocations which were sung to him, as identical with those sung in his youth, and named the occasions on which each was used. *Maligi* was recognised as sung when honey was taken; the invocation at the beginning of the *kirikoruha* ceremony (cf. p. 285) was promptly named, and the occasions of its use pointed out, but the charm used when driving monkeys was not recognised. A song sung for amusement by the Veddas beginning *Mamini mamini ma deyo* was immediately recognised, as were two of the invocations of the Kolamaduva ceremony, but considering how Sinhalese in substance this ceremony is this is perhaps not of much importance.

At the present day the number of Veddas living their natural forest life is necessarily few, for their territory has been gradually encroached upon by the Sinhalese who are inveterate poachers. The Veddas, who were never numerous within recent historic times, are now rapidly dying out, while many have settled among the Sinhalese and so lost their identity. We met with only four families who still led the life described by Bailey in 1863, and these were not among the Nilgala but among the Nuwaragala Hills. At Nilgala itself there are no Veddas at the present day, though the local peasant Sinhalese doubtless have much Vedda blood in their veins. The Henebedda and Danigala Veddas are the descendants of those recorded by Bailey in 1863, and the Kovil Vanamai Veddas are the descendants of those known and described by the old Kandyan who visited us at Bandaraduwa.

Hennebedda. At Hennebedda we met a number of families living together in the Bendiyagalge caves. They had come to this their largest cave, from several settlements all within a few hours' journey. The genealogies show that at least

[1] These ceremonies are described in Chapter IX.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

115 putation when he first joined our party, but it was very soon evident that he was handier, quicker and more intelligent in every way than the other peasant Sinhalese with whom we came in contact. Still later we discovered that by his influence a large clearing had been illegally made in a remote part of the jungle near Nuwaragala, and that on account of this he was doing his best to prevent our coming in contact with the Sitala Wanniya Veddas in whose territory the clearing had been made. Although in this he played us false and caused much needless trouble we found him in other matters a perfectly trustworthy witness, and as he had associated more or less constantly with the Kovil Vanamai Veddas from the age of 10 to 20, there is every reason 161 to accept his account of their condition 25 years ago. At this 221 time there were about 50 families, i.e. some 200 people, who led 621 a wandering hunting life for half of the year, during which time they lived in rock shelters and depended largely on honey; for the rest of the year they paid more or less attention to chena cultivation, growing especially maize and *kurakkan* (*Eleusine coracana*). Two or three families—not necessarily the same year after year—would usually wander and hunt together; such groups of families might also make chenas together, though five or six families would often join to make a single chena.

222 Although they had a few guns even 20 years ago, bows and 411 arrows were in common use and much of their hunting consisted 423 of monkey drives. There were no mixed Sinhalese and Vedda 621 chenas then. The Arachi remembers three caves belonging to the ancestors of the present Bandaraduwa Veddas, viz. Walimbagalagalge, Ellavellagalge and Vianbendegalge. Each family was the recognised possessor of one or more rocky hills on which there were colonies of the rock bee, but the whole of the small hunting community would join to collect honey from each hill and the honey was always equally shared.

614 The Kovil Vanamai Veddas belonged to Morane and Unapane and Uru *varige*. The latter lived apart near Uniche, i.e. between Tumpalamcholai and the coast. The Arachi states 197 that the language has altered during the last 20 years, Tamil 128 tending to displace Sinhalese, thus *hirakodel*, "nothing," is said

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

instead of *kodai*, *tiru* being a Tamil word, so that a composite word meaning "really nothing" is now used.

At the present day there are probably no more than a dozen families left as representatives of the Kovil Vanamai Veddas and all of these live on Sinhalese chenas and are in dire poverty. The country has been referred to already as unhealthy, monkeys although abundant are not easily approached especially in the dry season, and other game is scarce. Isolated families have settled down in Sinhalese villages to pick up whatever living they can as occasional hired labourers, and some of these people were seen in a wretchedly starved condition. The most prosperous are three families living on the large Sinhalese chena (Plate XII, figure 1) at Bandaraduwa near Devulani tank. But even with the assistance of the chena these people are not well off, and it appeared that they were no strangers to hunger. Owing to their position on the border of the Sinhalese and Tamil country, they had been influenced by both Hinduism and Buddhism to a certain extent. In spite of this they knew numerous Vedda songs and incantations, and the ceremonies following a death which occurred in the vicinity during our visit clearly demonstrated that foreign ideas formed but a thin stratum overlying their own beliefs.

The Uniche Veddas were not seen in their own country but some men were brought to us by the Forest Ranger, Mr S. Perera, at Maha Oya, where the photograph shown in Plate XII was taken. We have no note that these Veddas were Uru *warige* men, but it seems probable that they represented the Uru *warige* community recorded (as mentioned by the Vedda Arachi) on the last page. They had retained their own customs and beliefs very largely and appeared to be living in a condition very similar to the people near Devulani, though perhaps they were better fed.

Sitala Wanniya. After visiting so many decaying or degenerate communities a refreshing state of affairs was found at Sitala Wanniya. Here there were at least four families who were living the life their forefathers had lived for generations without perceptible change. They still found game, honey and yams in quantities sufficient not only to support life, but to leave

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

calca and Badulla. The largest Veddah population is in the former district, and these are they of whom Tennent principally writes, but they are by no means the wildest specimens of the race. They have not maintained so complete an isolation from other races as those I am about to describe, and consequently are not worthy of the same attention.*

It is the "Wilder Sort" of Veddahs, as Knox calls them, of whom I desire to place on record an accurate description, before they quite pass away and are forgotten.

They roam about through the park-like district of Nilgala, which presents, of its kind, perhaps the loveliest scenery in this beautiful island, and wander among the forests of Bintenne—that "Land of Bintan all covered with mighty woods and filled with abundance of deer", where Knox tells us these dreaded "Wild Men" dwelt.

It would be difficult to conceive more barbarous types of the human race than they present. Yet there are degrees even in their barbarism, for those of Nilgala are wilder than their brethren of Bintenne. They are fewer in number, and more diminutive in stature. They are distributed through their lovely country in small septa, or families, occupying generally caves in the rocks, though some have little bark huts. They depend almost solely on hunting for their support,† and hold little communication even with each other.

Few in number as they are,—they did not exceed seventy-two persons in 1858,—still no other human beings are to be found for many miles round their habitations, and this seclusion has caused them to retain peculiarities which are fast disappearing, or have already disappeared from among even the wildest of Bintenne.‡

There, there are both wild and settled Veddahs. Of the latter

* See Tennent's remarks on the late Mr. Atherton's praiseworthy and successful labours in civilising the Veddahs of the Batticaloa district, where there are now only some two hundred and fifty who, having resisted all his efforts to improve them, still live in caves near the rock called Gunner's Quoin, and in Palla Palata of the Batticaloa Bintenne. I have been in communication with Mr. Birch, the present agent for government in that district, and, from specimens of their *patois* which he sent me, and which greatly resembles the Singhalese usually spoken, in those very words in which, in the Badulla district, the Veddah dialect differs from it, I am justified in describing them as having had, in some period of their history, more intercourse with the Singhalese than those of whom I am writing.

† Solely till 1856, when I succeeded in inducing them to turn their attention to cultivation; but they much prefer their own wild life, and their cultivation is very limited.

‡ In using the term Bintenne, I refer to that portion of the division of Bintenne which belongs to the Badulla district. A larger portion of the same division is in Batticaloa.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

I shall say nothing, for they have long associated, although they have not yet intermarried, with the neighbouring Singhalese. The former resemble those of Nilgala. If they are less wild, it is but a shade less wild, almost too slight to be called more civilised. They, in like manner, are distributed in small tribes or families. They live in huts formed of boughs and bark, not so much from any advance in civilisation, as from the dearth of rock caves, which abound in Nilgala; but they, too, become Troglodytes in wet weather. They cultivate small patches of chena,* but their chief source of livelihood is the produce of the chase, and honey; and they move about from forest to forest, guided by the blossoming of the flowers, in search of bees and game. Their number in 1838 was 364, but some of these even were much more wild than others.

Both Nilgala and Bintenne Veddahs regard, for each tribe, particular tracts of country as their own, and are, as Knox tells us, careful not to trespass over each other's bounds, and they observe the custom, still prevalent among Kandyans, which entitles the lord of the soil to a portion of the game killed upon it.†

In my description of the wild Veddahs of Nilgala, and those of Bintenne, it is well to bear in mind that, though they are not fifty miles apart, there is no communication whatever between them. No individual Veddah of the one district ever saw one of the other. They are entirely distinct; but distinct only in geographical position. They have inherited the same customs, superstitions, names, and dialect.‡

In appearance, the Veddahs differ materially from the Singhalese. They are smaller in every respect, and rather darker, or, more properly, more dusky in complexion. They are short, slightly built, yet very active. Though far from being muscular, their limbs are firmly knit together, and they are athletic and capable of enduring great fatigue. Though spare, they are generally in very fair condition, and look more healthy than many of the Singhalese in the adjoining districts.§

The tallest Veddah I ever saw, a man so towering above his

* A "chêna" is a patch of ground cleared from the forest for cultivation. The jungle is burnt down, a crop taken off, and then suffered to grow up again. It is reclaimed again after intervals of from five to ten years.

† This custom is called gang-gätä, lit. village hind leg; "gama" would be better translated "townships", as it signifies a tract of ground within certain limits. The lord of the soil claims the "hind leg" of any deer, etc., killed within his bounds.

‡ The Veddahs of the Badulla Bintenne appear a distinct sept; those of Nilgala are connected with a Veddah family living just across the Batticaloa boundary, close to which their country lies.

§ I use the term "Singhalese" and "Kandyan" in distinction from "Veddah."

4: Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

effectual so long as there were no influences to weaken it, but when once a preponderating force came to surround these clans, their chance of survival was small, and to prevent individual extinction amalgamation presented the path of minimum resistance.

The effect of this amalgamation was to break down the primitive methods, and concurrently to infuse new blood, and with it to stay, or lessen, the forces that were weakening an already over-inbred stock.

If we refer to certain statistics, as recently as 1840 we find that a rough enumeration of the so-called Rock-Veddas disclosed that only thirty families in Bintenna then existed.

Since then the increase of civilised races pressed with yearly greater insistence, till we are forced to conclude that the primitive Vedda is now no more, or nearly so.

In my Paper read at the meeting of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society on September 19, 1914, I have described the features of the Vedda family I found at Setawa, but I venture here to repeat it for easy reference.

The man Dissan Hamy is about 5 ft. 10 in. in height, thin, small round the chest, with rather short arms, slender legs, with hardly any calf development. He does not know his age. His head is small, with small dark-brown beady eyes set far back in their sockets. His hair is short, not tied in a knot, staring, and frizzy. His younger brother is shorter in stature, but with the same character of hair on the head. The elder has short, scanty, and bristly moustaches, but in both brothers there is a marked scarcity of hair on the face and body. Dissan Hamy's two sisters are both of normal height, and dress like the other women of the country. They are about 5 ft. 3 in. in height, with slender limbs. Both women are mothers, and both indicated the small breast development that appears to be characteristic of women residing in the arid parts of the country I explored. In both women the hair is short and frizzy. Their infants had shaved heads.

I remarked that the skin of Dissan Hamy's body is darker than that of the other members of the family. The nose is strongly formed, with thin dilated nostrils. The mouth is rather wide, with lips of no unusual thickness.

3. A VEDDA OF DIVULANA

DIVULANA was recompense for our toil. The irrigation bungalow, placed high above the bund, over-looked the beautiful hill-encircled tank, whose glassy surface was broken by stones and snags on which cormorants and darters sunned.

Two miles within the forest lived Naga-Kauwa, a witless dwarf of fifty, the sole Vedda of Divulana. Born in Kovil Vannami, he came as a child to the Rasagala caves, of which in their best day his people occupied four or five. Now he and his family alone survived. Three years ago he had abandoned cave life for that of the *chena* ; and there we found him amidst his cassava and the tender teak he nursed for a consideration from Government.

His stalwart sons—quite unlike the father—brought us some yams, a mouse deer and a primitive drum—the broken-off rim of an earthen pot covered with wanderoo skin and fitted with a taut fibre.

Kauwa's hut was a thing to behold. The Tamils had said, "See Kauwa, this is the way to build a house" ; and Kauwa had built this crazy thing a child of twelve might have bettered. The thatch was a medley of dry grass and bark ; the walls were of wattle, which stuck out untrimmed through the roof, and bark slats so poorly fitted together that there was more aperture than cover. The structure was no more than four-foot square and two-storied at that ; merely a covered trestle three feet off the ground. In the lower floor his wife and children lay huddled like rats ; on the upper, its irregularities smoothed with bundles of rush (primary elements of a mat), the lord and master slept. Such was the caveman's first attempt at fashioning an abode. By the entrance was a fireplace, and, scattered about, were the bones of monkeys and monitor lizards and the carapaces of tortoises that had served for food. Stuck in the roof was a broken comb of buffalo horn, true touch of civilisation, for the test of a real Vedda is that his hair must be stranger to a comb.

Getting information from Kauwa was like squeezing water out of a stone ; he could no more describe the simplest thing than he could fly. Still, patience does much and this is what we gleaned :

Tortoises and pangolins are considered good eating by the Veddas ; but the porcupine they abhor, calling it a *vodiya* among beasts, and only killing it to give to their dogs. Why Veddas never eat porcupine I have not been able to ascertain : it is said that, in the old lawless days, they would go the length of burning down a Sinhalese hut in which they discovered a porcupine being cooked. Pork they love because it clears the blood, and one or two pigs a month the Vedda must have. Venison causes itching and is not so good !

Vedda cookery, simple in the extreme, can still boast some tasty dishes : *Gona-perume* is a sausage consisting of alternate layers of sambur meat and fat. *Le-perume* is the same, with the addition of a third layer of blood-clot. *Goa-thel-perume* is made by skinning the monitor's meaty

S: Spittel D-S (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

these Veddas. Bingoda is not all Vedda; essentially it is a Sinhalese *gama* village of about six or eight families, within a stone's throw of which are the crude huts belonging to the few surviving Veddas. Through a tangle of overgrown scrub we reach them; they are not so numerous that we cannot easily name every single Vedda there.

Three we have met before, Suthubanda, Gama and Badapissa; it was they who led us such a chase at Galmede. In the first hut we find the swarthy Gama and his comely young wife Kalu—his fifth experiment in matrimony: and he barely twenty-five! Not far from this is Suthubanda's abode, in which are his wife, the skinny Thuthi, mother by previous marriage of Gamma; their two little boys, Handuna and Naida and girls Kumi and Punji. Handuna is the quaintest brat imaginable; he is ash-coloured from top to toe, through crouching by the hearth all night to keep warm his naked body; for, all he has for cover is a little strip of loin cloth drooping erratically from a slack waist-string that sags well below his nates; his rotund abdomen accommodates an enormous spleen; with hands crossed over shrugged shoulders to keep the chill away he gazes quizzically at you.

Away from these two homes, across the stream, is the only other Vedda hut. Unlike those of Suthubanda and Gama which are of wattle and bast, this is a sadly dilapidated mud structure once occupied by a Moor. It is the most pathetic and curious menage here, and belongs to Kaira brother of Suthubanda. His wife Randunna, a hideous squint-eyed thing, is mother by a previous husband to Heenthuthi the twelve-year old wife of Badapissa (Muthua), Kaira's younger brother! A more ridiculous pair it would be hard to find: the wife a mere child, the husband barely more. The Veddas favour such early marriages, saying that, growing up thus together, the two learn to love each other well. Be that as it may, it does seem a most piteous travesty of human matings. Huddled by the hearth and shivering with ague, is old Thanthi mother of the clan, and wife of the dead chief Neela. And, lastly, we have here the most pathetic figure in all Bingoda—Kummi, a girl of fifteen, dust-besmeared, ulcerated, crippled, and so scantily clad that she is ashamed to stand lest she reveal her nakedness. A misery to herself and others, she sits apart with face shyly lowered, taking timid glances every now and then, like some wild thing, from large black lustrous eyes that might have shone befittingly on the face of some proud beauty.

To these, though they now dwelt apart at Mullegama, we must add Kaurala and his family, for he too was of Bingoda, and is maternal uncle of Suthubanda. By his two wives, Balli and Ranni, he has four little sons, Kaira Vanniya, Heratha, Kalua and Sela; and two daughters, Ranni and Dingi.

These details, though perhaps tedious, serve to bring out vividly the intimate inter-relationships of the Veddas, their apparent disregard of appearance or age in their choice of wives, the promiscuity of life in their one-roomed homes—mother, child and father all lying huddled together in a little space. For all that it must not be assumed that Veddas are devoid of a moral code. A man may have more than one wife, it is true; and, if it pleases him, he may cast her aside like a worn garment; but to each man his own woman while she is his; that is the Vedda law which all respect.

8: Spinal D-6 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

A Vedda woman, who had preserved bunches of the fruit in a pot of honey, was able to provide them; and so earned the name of her tribe. The Unapana *waruge*, like all the other *waruges*, also owed its name to a woman. She, when a king was out hunting in a parched land, supplied him with drink by squeezing out her dew-drenched cloth! Thirst apparently destroys the fastidiousness even of kings. The Rugam *waruge* derives from an incident connected with the building of the bund of Rugam tank. After its completion, this earth-work used to break down with the yearly floods despite all efforts at consolidating it. The Sinhalese king of the time had a vision one night telling him, that if a pregnant woman were built alive into the bund, it would ever after remain intact. A Vedda woman was sacrificed, and her clan received the name of the tank. The Uru *waruge* was called after a child-birth in a pig's hole; the Tala *waruge* after such an episode in a *talawa* or glade; the Nabudena, Kiribo and Embille *waruges* after similar occurrences under *nabudu*, *kiribo* and *embilla* trees respectively. The Veddas being nomadic these incidents are common. Gama, as we have seen, owed his name to being born on the way (*gamana*). [551]

Though shy and retiring by nature, Veddas are always to be found in the vicinity of Sinhalese settlements; and that, for good reasons: Ceylon being but a small island, its remotest forests are easily accessible; more so in recent years when roads and railways have spread out their tentacles everywhere claiming from Nature her wildest solitudes. Any jungles that have not yet fallen a prey to planting enterprise owe it largely to their aridity and unhealthiness. Nowhere is there a spot in Ceylon to-day that is not within ten miles of some habitation. Besides, it is to the mutual advantage of both Vedda and Sinhalese to be near each other, for if the one can supply grain in days of dearth, the other can repay tenfold with flesh and honey in season.

The Sinhalese affect an indulgent tolerance towards the Veddas, and aver them to be more of a nuisance than a help, saying the Veddas have to be kept alive when starving. The Vedda, on the other hand, will tell you that he is never in want; for the jungle, even in its worst months, is never totally devoid of food for him who knows where to find it: *kanava* and *koths* combs are always there, and meat and yams of one sort or another. It must however be admitted, that the Veddas have a great partiality for what the unaided jungle cannot give—*kurrukkan*, maize, and tobacco. Rice is a welcome occasional meal to the Vedda, but he cannot do without *kurrukkan*; it takes much rice to fill the stomach, whereas a *kurrukkan* cake is like a stone, and even a small piece satisfies.

A Sinhalese told us that if you gave a Vedda much by way of barter, he would never come near you again, but would go where the giving was more niggardly. (What a salve to the conscience!) We asked a Vedda if this was true: "Much they give us," he said; "though they are always ready enough to take all we give them—and more." [439]

In the bottom of their hearts the Veddas have a suspicion that the Sinhalese wish them no good. A Vedda, when asked how it was that their numbers had dwindled so, said, with simple faith, that it was due to the Sinhalese having killed out his people, by giving them charmed tobacco to eat, so that they died of disease or misadventure. The recent influenza epidemic fairly wiped out the last of the Veddas.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

interfusion of Vedda blood—the apathetic look, the scanty beard, were unmistakably there. The area we had to traverse was not extensive, hemmed in, as it was, by the Bibile-Maha Oya road on the one hand and Mahaweli on the other. It is five miles from Alutnuwara to Arawatta; six miles from that to the Ulhitiya Oya; thence seven to Beligalla which is within four to six miles of Bulugahadena and Dambana, the Vedda haunts of to-day. The going is through forest comparatively well peopled: and *chenas* are frequently met with; changing from year to year, these often absorb the path and obliterate it, causing deviations which lead astray even guides conversant with the country a few months previously. 131

We were nearing Bulugahadena when we met our first Vedda of these parts—a tall, picturesque fellow with ear-rings, shouldering his bow and stave with a small gourdful of honey slung on its end. Unspoilt, reserved and natural, in contrast to his fellows whom we afterwards met, he was the finest Vedda we saw in Bintenne. 101 [301] [157]

In an environment, not of virgin forest, but of derelict *chenas* we found the Veddas of Bulugahadena. They lived scattered about, a hut or two to each *chena*, and not in groups as one so often sees; the explanation we were given for this was not the obvious one that *chenas* were apparently easier of acquisition here than elsewhere, but that it served to keep the families apart and prevent social entanglements, Veddas being very jealous of their women. [301] [626] 152]

There was no reserve about these people. As we approached each hut, the men, armed with axes, bows and arrows, came out and greeted us vociferously in the Vedda language; Sinhalese they affected not to know. Their women were mostly sullen and silent; but one at least gave us a better reception than her husband did. Here and there a sickly wretch craved for medicine. 576 [411]

Their huts, made of bark slats and wattle, were too well built for Vedda habitations; they had not that crudity and unkemptness so characteristic of the huts of the wilder Veddas, and most of them were finished off with a neat fence-work. There was no lack of *kurrukkan* and maize here; and on the whole they seemed a fairly prosperous and contented community. 342 [241]

The Veddas of Dambana, who lived four miles away, were much the same as those of Bulugahadena; and so were the others we met scattered about these jungles. One lot we found picturesquely grouped in a rock-shelter, reproducing to perfection the old cave life; but they were obviously there for our benefit! 101 361

Of these Veddas, considered as a whole, we may say that we had never before seen so many of them as on this short trip of barely a week. On previous journeys, after having traversed miles and miles of jungle, we had met only a Vedda here and a Vedda there, never more than a dozen in all, often but one or two. But in Bintenne we saw no less than about fifty good specimens. Though they were obviously sophisticated by their nearness to Badulla and the many occasions on which their representatives had been on show, Vedda blood is still strong in Bintenne. This is the place to come to if one wishes to pick up the few words that are left of the Vedda language, and the art of making bows and arrows; but apart from that, these people are too civilised to be interesting. 161● 177

One episode we experienced here is worth recalling. Two Veddas, better disposed towards us than the rest, one with his lip all askew from 224